



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Six Defendants Indicted in a Federal Drug Trafficking Conspiracy;
One Faces Possible Death Penalty for 2005 Homicide

FARGO - United States Attorney Drew Wrigley announced that a Federal grand jury indicted six defendants on a nine-count Federal indictment involving a wide-ranging drug trafficking conspiracy. One of the six defendants, **Michael Alan Petzold**, was also charged with the June 2005 murder of Lee Avila, which the grand jury alleges was in furtherance of a continuing criminal enterprise. Avila was shot multiple times and killed in East Grand Forks, Minnesota. Murder in furtherance of a drug conspiracy of this nature is a death penalty-eligible offense. Making their first appearances on January 27, 2006, in United States District Court before United States District Court Magistrate Judge Karen K. Klein were **Michael Alan Petzold**, 23, Norfolk, Nebraska; **Soledad Ybarra**, 21, Moorhead, Minnesota; and **Francisca Avila Vargas**, 44, St. Paul, Minnesota. Also indicted in the conspiracy were **Anthony Hector Valdez**, 22, Turlock, California; **Lacey Kathryn Johnson**, 18, and **Jonathan Olbay Meyer**, 21, both of Fargo, North Dakota.

The Federal grand jury alleges that these conspirators and others moved large quantities of methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana from California, Washington state, Mexico, Minnesota, and North Dakota. The alleged incidents occurred from January of 2002 until the time of the indictment.

United States Attorney Drew Wrigley said that, "The investigation is still in a very active phase, with the possibility of additional arrests and indictments." He complimented the work of Federal, state,

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and local law enforcement involved in the case.

The case is being investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration; Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Investigation; Polk County Attorney's Office; Fargo, West Fargo, and East Grand Forks Police Departments; Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Clay County Sheriff's Department; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Internal Revenue Service; United States Marshals Service; and the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

Wrigley stressed that an indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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